

VZCZCXYZ0010
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHEG #4758 2141335
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 021335Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0312
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS CAIRO 004758

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA/PPD FOR ROBIN SMITH AND DAVID BENZE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPT MEDIA TRENDS: AUGUST 2, 2006

¶1. Summary. The Israeli ground offensive, Syria's readying of forces and reaction to President Bush's statements about the conflict in Lebanon while in Florida were themes in the day's headlines and news stories. Papers called the Qana bombing "terrorism" and accused Bush of insensitivity toward the victims of Qana. The specter of a regional war was debated on evening talk shows and in the commentaries, while an online poll in one popular Egyptian website showed the vast majority of voters believe the conflict will end with an Hezbollah military victory. End Summary.

¶2. In the headlines. The picture of a potential regional war loomed over the day's headlines in all papers. Pro-government daily, Al-Ahram announced, "Syria Confirms Israel's Intentions to Attack Her and Peretz Accuses Her of Transferring Weapons to Hezbollah." Opposition daily, Al-Wafd's second headline proclaimed, "The Middle East is on the Verge of War: Syria Prepares," and pro-government daily, Al-Gomhouriya, announced that "The Superpowers Are Using Israel to Torment the Region." Other headlines focused on the Israeli land campaign and criticism of the bombing in Qana in light of President Bush's comments the previous day from Florida. Al-Gomhouriya called the Qana bombing "the High Point of State Terrorism" and a prominent headline in pro-government daily, Al-Akhbar, decried, "Bush Says Qana's Massacre Equals the Horror of the Missiles." Independent daily, Al-Masry Al-Yom quoted President Bush, "The Qana incident is as horrible as Israeli fear of Hezbollah's rockets" and Al-Wafd's headline in red announced, "Bush declares war on Islam" next to which was a large photo of President Bush grimacing while descending from a plane. The accompanying caption read, "Bush loses balance."

¶3. In the commentaries. The specter of war dominated discussion in some Egyptian television evening talk shows. For example, guests on Channel One's evening program, "An Hour of Politics," argued that "Rice is setting a new stage for the scene of the greater Middle East that she will deliver through blood and destruction," that "the more the US pressures, the more extremists evolve in future generations," and "this war is widening the cycle of violence in the region... and hitting Syria because it supports Hezbollah may create an unanticipated chaos." Commentaries in the papers also debated that issue. In the words of one moderate commentator who is also a friend of the embassy, "the moment of major confrontation has come...the extremist rabbis hailing the Qana massacre, and President Bush's indifferent statements that Qana is similar to Hezbollah's attacks... he forgets that Israel is an occupying state." The writer went on to declare "a regional war is about to begin, where more violence will appear, and Arab rulers will be hated by all." A columnist in independent daily, Al-Masry Al-Yom, calculated that "the US and Israel are rushing to crush the resistance and implicate Syria and Iran ... and Syria and Iran are ready to fight back."

¶4. Public sentiment. An online poll in Egyptian website, Masrawy.com, asked voters to predict Hezbollah's reaction to the Qana bombing. From a total of 6,500 votes, 80 percent predicted that "Hezbollah will strike and reach the heart of Israel." Less than 2 percent believed that Hezbollah would "return the two

soldiers to avoid civilian bloodshed" and 13 percent voted in favor of international mediation for a prisoner swap.
RICCIARDONE